



MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS. IMPROVE WELLNESS.

Relationships and Intimacy for Wounded, Ill, and Injured Sailors and Marines.

Changes in your social life

Serving as a Sailor or Marine is a great source of honor and pride. While serving, you may have experienced a wound, illness, or injury that impacted your psychological and emotional well-being, disrupted your everyday routine, or interrupted your social life. You may find yourself spending less time with your social network or significant other due to the time and energy required for your treatment and recovery. You may also experience pain, numbness, fatigue, stress, anxiety, depression, or medication side effects that can impact your relationship with your partner. Communicating and maintaining strong bonds with your partner, family, friends, peers, and your community are essential to long term psychological and emotional well-being and physical health. The Health Promotion and Wellness Department of the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center offers resources for service members and their families that include strategies and suggestions for nurturing personal relationships and achieving physical and mental wellness.

Maintaining Relationships

The relationships you built before and during your treatment and recovery may change, but they will likely remain your primary support system after your recovery. Maintaining these relationships takes effort, but they can provide you with rewards that last a lifetime. Your family, friends, and peers all want to be there for you. Be honest with them about what to expect, and how to talk about your wound, illness, or injury. Sharing your perspective with others is a good way to prevent misunderstandings and opens the door for honest communication.

Communicating with your partner.

One of the great advantages of being in a relationship is that you don't have to go through this alone. Sit down with your partner

and acknowledge that your wound, illness, or injury affects both of you. Create a list of your intimacy concerns and ask your partner to talk through it with you. It may be uncomfortable to express in detail what you are going through. But, you must trust that you and your partner are a team, and that communication can help you both work through the impact these differences have had on your ability or desire to be intimate.

Reestablishing trust and intimacy can take some time and will require ongoing openness and patience. If you find that you or your partner are withdrawing, go on a date or set aside time for each other away from the hospital, home, or other causes of stress. Remember to communicate with each other and to reach out for support when you need it.

Expanding your social network

Forming new relationships and exploring new interests allows you to learn about yourself, increase engagement in your community, and participate in enjoyable activities. New activities such as participating in a local sport league, volunteering, furthering your education, or finding peer support can help you engage in your current relationships and establish new ones. All of these are social activities that give you an opportunity to connect with others and accomplish something for yourself or your community.

Talk to your healthcare team.

You may feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or embarrassed addressing intimacy concerns with your doctor. Start by giving your doctor background information on your family history, personal health history, current symptoms, and medications. Writing down questions about the possibility of sex, changed sensation, emotional concerns with intimacy, fatigue, body image, or medication side effects can keep your conversation focused and professional. Acknowledge, repeat, paraphrase or write down the answers to your questions to make sure you grasp the information.

To learn how our programs can help facilitate recovery and strengthen resilience, visit us at [HTTP://WWW.MED.NAVY.MIL/SITES/NMCPHC/WOUNDED-ILL-AND-INJURED/PAGES/HEALTH-PROMOTION.ASPX](http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/wounded-ill-and-injured/pages/health-promotion.aspx).

For more information on your local resources, contact:



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE